Peer-assisted Learning

PAL Leader Handbook

2015/2016

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What is PAL?

Peer-assisted learning is where students act as PAL Leaders and provide academic support to other students in lower levels. PAL Leaders will have taken the courses that the students are currently studying and are therefore in an excellent position to provide support and advice from the perspective of a student – something that the academic staff are unable to do.

It is important to remember that PAL is not the same as teaching. The role of a PAL Leader is to provide academic support, to help consolidate information, and to give study advice and revision help. Importantly, the PAL sessions should be student-led. The students and PAL Leaders should agree on what the PAL sessions will focus on so that the leaders have time to prepare. PAL Leaders are not
expected to always know the answers and PAL is not a substitute for a lack of effort on a student’s behalf. If a student attends a PAL session and asks for help on a topic they had not previously requested help with, the PAL Leaders should not be expected to be able to help without being given time to prepare. It is important for both the PAL Leaders and the students to understand that PAL is a collaborative process and is not simply extra teaching from fellow students.

It is also important to note that PAL is a source of academic, rather than personal support. Whilst it is likely that the PAL Leaders will be asked some questions that are not strictly academic in nature, the Students 4 Students scheme provides peer-support for pastoral issues. In some cases students should be referred to their personal tutor.

**PAL Leader responsibilities**

As a PAL leader you are expected to prepare for and attend all PAL sessions from week 2-11 of each semester. In addition, you are required to participate in the revision sessions, attend compulsory training, and attend feedback meetings with the PAL co-ordinator. Each level of PAL needs to decide what the focus of each session will be and to inform the Team Leader who will forward the information to the co-ordinator for the weekly e-mail that is sent out to all students advertising the sessions. The weekly e-mail is usually sent out on Fridays. Each level of PAL also needs to create a weekly Facebook event for their session – this person is usually chosen in the first PAL meeting. See specific sections for more information.

**PAL Team Leader responsibilities**

The PAL Team Leader assumes a position of leadership and responsibility for the group of PAL Leaders in addition to being a Psych Soc committee member. The Team Leader may remind PAL leaders of upcoming meetings, provide additional advice and training to new PAL Leaders, assist the PAL co-ordinator with organisational issues including the weekly e-mail, and contribute to the advancement of PAL by continually evaluating the effectiveness of the current structure and identifying potential improvements. The PAL Team Leader must have acted as a PAL Leader for at least one full academic year.

**How much time does being a PAL Leader require?**

Including the one-hour session, PAL may require up to 4 hours of your time per week. This covers preparing materials, creating Facebook events, attending sessions and feedback meetings.

**Training**

There will be a compulsory training session for all PAL Leaders, regardless of whether you have been a PAL Leader previously, in week 1 of term. There are also training notes at the end of this handbook that you should read. Above all, if you are a new PAL Leader you should talk to the established PAL
Leaders and the PAL Team Leader as they have a wealth of experience. However, the training notes will be available in the PAL room for guidance.

Absences
Some absences are unavoidable due to illness or other high-priority commitments. However, by signing up to be a PAL Leader you must be reliable. If you are frequently absent from the PAL sessions it is unfair on the other PAL leaders who will have to pick up your workload and it is unfair on the students who attend the sessions as they will be expecting to see you there. If you miss 3 PAL sessions in a single semester you will be asked to resign as PAL Leader. If you are going to be absent from a session you must contact your fellow PAL Leaders and you must also contact the PAL co-ordinator. If you are having issues with your commitment as a PAL Leader you should speak with either the Team Leader or the PAL Co-ordinator.

PAL timetable
The PAL timetable is quite difficult to create as the PAL sessions cannot clash with the timetable of the PAL leaders or the students who wish to participate. PAL Leaders must finalise their timetable as soon as they can in Freshers’ Week. Where possible the PAL co-ordinator will try to facilitate this by making tutorial group times available in advance. Each PAL level must decide on two or three possible options for when the session will run and send these times to the PAL co-ordinator by the end of Freshers’ Week. The students will then vote on which time they would prefer in week 1, and the timetable will be finalised and the PAL sessions will begin in week 2 of term. Unless there is any reason to change, the timetable will remain the same in the second half-session.

Fresher’s week and Psych Soc
The PAL Team Leader and/or the Level 1 PAL Leaders should attend the Level 1 induction lecture to promote PAL to the new Level 1 students. The induction lecture is typically on the Friday of Freshers’ Week, the PAL Co-ordinator will inform you as soon as possible of the date and the time of the lecture.

In addition to the induction lecture, leaflets explaining PAL should be updated and given to Psych Soc for the Societies Fair. As a committee member of Psych Soc the PAL Team Leader is responsible for ensuring this happens. The old version of the leaflets will be made available on MyAberdeen and new versions should subsequently be uploaded.

PAL should work with Psych Soc, through the PAL Team Leader, to promote activities from both organisations and to develop any future collaborations. Finally, there will be a joint Psych Soc – PAL social event at the beginning of the year to promote both organisations, academic staff will also be invited through the PAL Co-ordinator.
What happens in the PAL sessions?

The content of the PAL sessions is primarily decided upon by the students who attend PAL. In the past we have found that students seem to prefer when the sessions focus on content from the methodology courses, e.g., statistics and report writing, although at certain points of the year theory course essay writing and revision are also popular, particularly for the theory assignments at Levels 2 and 3. The PAL Co-ordinator will send out a weekly e-mail detailing what each of the PAL sessions will cover in the following week. We have found that PAL is more popular when this e-mail states specific topics to be covered (e.g., multiple regression, rather than just ‘statistics’). You should make an effort to ensure that the students who attend PAL provide you with guidance on what they want to cover, however, sometimes this does not happen for various reasons. If this is the case, the PAL Leaders should decide upon a specific topic based upon their knowledge of upcoming assignments or particular difficulties and inform the PAL Co-ordinator.

In some cases students may bring along their work and ask you to check it. In these cases you should make general comments and point out anything you think is wrong but you should not correct the work yourself.

You should also highlight the fact that the advice you are giving is that - advice. It may be that their tutor wants certain things e.g., in a report, and PAL Leaders should encourage the students to always check with their tutor for specific requirements.

First session

The first PAL session in week 2 should be used to get to know the students who attend PAL. Typically, the number of students who attend the earlier sessions will be much higher than the number who continue to attend throughout the semester but it is an important in terms of setting the tone and introducing yourselves. You should think of possible icebreakers and methods of getting the students to interact with you and with each other. This is particularly important for Level 1 as they are unlikely to know any of their fellow students and in this way PAL can help new students settle into university and to feel like they are part of Psychology.

The first session should also be used to plan the coming half-session. There will be a wall calendar in the PAL room and the PAL Co-ordinator will provide copies of the handbooks for each course. You should work with the students to make a note of all the deadlines for the half-session as this will give you a good idea of what they may want to cover. General advice can also be given in the first session, e.g., how to use the proxy server, how to download journal articles, how to install software on personal laptops, general advice on what to expect for the coming academic year etc.

Importantly, try to convey the collaborative nature of PAL in the first session. Avoid standing at the front of the room with any kind of presentation as this will reinforce the idea that they are being
‘taught’. Try to do activities that involve you working as a group, with the PAL Leaders sitting with the other students.

Below are details of previous sessions in the second half-session of 2014/2015. Whilst this is not a comprehensive list of the entire academic year (and the specific content taught in each course may change from year-to-year) it should give you some idea of what happens in PAL.

**Level 1**

**Week 2**

Introductory session: formulated a plan for the future sessions (led by level 1 students’ input). They specifically asked us to dedicate a number of sessions to the report, so we decided to divide up the report and go over a section of the report each week.

**Week 3**

We dedicated the session to going over how to write the abstract and introduction sections of the report (i.e. the structure, content, approximate word length etc.) – we used a poster from the PAL resource folder which illustrates how the introduction is synonymous with an “upside down pyramid” (the content begins broad and then becomes more specific). The level 1 students’ said that they found this a useful visual tool. We also drew on examples from our own reports in our explanations.

**Week 4**

We dedicated the session to going over how to write the results and discussion sections of the report (i.e. the structure, content, approximate word length etc.). We used the white-board to outline a checklist of what each section should contain.

**Week 5**

We dedicated the session to going over how to write the methods section of the report (i.e. the different sub-sections, structure, content, approximate word length etc.). I printed off an example of a methods section (taken from one of my reports) for them to look at.

**Week 6**

The focus of the session was the upcoming ethics assignment. The session was structured as a group discussion, where we collectively discussed the ethics assignment questions (feedback from the level 1 students’ indicated that they found this helpful – many of them brought along their assignment).

**Week 7**

Students were asked to bring along their SONA assignment from the previous term. Since there was only a small group of level 1 students’ we were able to individually look over their assignments and give them advice on how to improve on their writing style.
Week 8
Following feedback from the level 1 students on how they wanted the session to be structured, they brought along their SONA assignments for this term in order to get a second opinion/advice. We went over the SONA checklist that had been given to them by their tutors.

Week 9
In preparation for the upcoming report, we designed and distributed two different exercises (see materials on MyAberdeen) on APA referencing - they were required to identify and correct mistakes in the references (the students said they found this good practice, especially for those that had not used APA referencing before).

Week 10
I designed and distributed an exercise (see materials on MyAberdeen) which entailed writing a methods section using the basic bullet-point information provided. This gave them a clearer indication into the components that constitute the methods section, and how to coherently string them together.

Week 11
Students brought along their report for a second opinion/advice. The session was structured as a group discussion, where students raised any issues and queries they had.

Level 2
In 2014/2015 the Level 2 cohort was very small and as a result there are not detailed descriptions for each PAL session. In general, the most popular sessions were those that focused on essay writing in the first semester and specific sections of the reports for PS2018/PS2518.

Another popular focus was the practice questions from Dr. Ray’s statistics lectures. You will be given access to the MyAberdeen courses for the level you are leading so that you can access the questions that are provided that year.

Level 3
1. Methodology: The sessions that focused on the methodology lectures were typically more successful as students do not need to do extra preparation before the session. These sessions focused on:
   1.1. Lecture material: Questions from past exam papers related to each lecture. Students were encouraged to discuss each possible answer and provide an explanation why this is the correct answer.
   1.2. SPSS class exercises: Students worked in pairs on a SPSS exercise covered in their class. Support was predominantly provided in relation to the interpretation of outputs.
1.3. Practical projects: Support was provided in relation to data analysis and interpretation of outputs/results. Students were required to have an understanding of the study they conducted and to provide sufficient information (e.g. hypothesis, variables) about the study.

1.4. Presentations: Students were provided with the grading criteria for their presentations. Additional information was added to each point that provided more detailed guidelines for dos and don'ts. Advice was also given on how to present in front of an audience.

1.5. Reports: Students were encouraged to bring drafts (either a particular section or a whole draft) or notes. Advice was provided in relation to stylistic/APA aspects. As each student has a different project, specific advice on theories/articles/accuracy of what was written was not provided.

2. Theory courses:

2.1. Lecture material: Sessions rarely focused on the theory courses, because this requires students to prepare for the session in advance (e.g. by going through the lecture material, doing the relevant readings etc.). Students usually don't look at the lectures until the end of term when they prepare for their exams.

- Questions from past exam papers and example questions constructed by the PAL leaders were provided. Students were encouraged to discuss as a group what arguments they might make in relation to each question, and to construct an essay plan. In these cases, it was more the PAL leaders that led the discussion and provided examples of arguments (as students were not familiar with the content of the lecture material).

2.2. Written assessments: The topics for each written assessment were discussed. Students were encouraged to participate in a group discussion and to discuss possible arguments/theories/papers. In terms of essays, no guidance was provided in terms of how to write an essay because at level 3, students are well aware of this. Students were also given the opportunity to bring drafts for the PAL leaders to look over and make general comments.

2.3. Critical reviews: In the first half of the session, students were given more detailed guidance about what a critical review is and what it is not, how to structure it and what aspects to discuss. They were also encouraged to look at the PowerPoint provided in their tutorials. In the second half of the session, there was a discussion on the relevant topic for the critical review (including different articles students read, arguments and possible ways to present these arguments in a critical review).

Overall, sessions focusing on methodology and written assessments were more effective than those focusing on the lecture material from the theory courses. The focus of each session for the following
week was agreed at the end of each PAL session – students were told in advance exactly what materials they will be provided with for each session (e.g. past exam papers, guidelines for how to write a critical review etc.). Materials were provided for each session apart from sessions that focused only on drafts. In addition, the PAL leaders familiarized themselves with the lecture and practical material that would be discussed during the session.

**Level 4 reading group**

The Level 4 reading group is new to 2015/2016 and as such there are no guidelines from previous years. The Level 4 group is likely to be a case of trial and error as we figure out the best way to structure the sessions. For the reading group the main issue is to decide on which lecture topics will be focused on each week. There are five lecture courses in each half-session of Level 4, some of which are more popular than others. You may wish to focus on one or two lecture topics per week and you may wish to suggest papers that the students should read before the session.

**Revision sessions**

PAL revision sessions are held in the revision week of both half-sessions. In these sessions you are not expected to prepare any material but to be there for students to come and ask you advice about the exams and their revision. All PAL Leaders are required to attend the revision session. The session is held over the entire day, each PAL Leader needs to attend for one hour. The timetable of when each PAL Leader will attend will be organised prior to revision week and will be advertised on Facebook and through the weekly e-mails.

**Feedback meetings**

Feedback meetings will be held three times per half-session with the PAL Co-ordinator and will take place in week 3, 6, and 9 of term. These meetings are an opportunity to discuss any potential concerns with the PAL Co-ordinator and will be used to plan things such as the revision sessions. The day and time of the feedback meetings will be arranged to allow as many of the PAL Leaders as possible to attend, but it is important that you make attending these meetings a priority. The feedback meetings are a scheduled point of contact with the PAL Co-ordinator, however, if you have any concerns or issues outwith the times of the feedback meetings you should e-mail the PAL Team Leader or the Co-ordinator.

**Use of Facebook**

All PAL Leaders should join the PAL Facebook group if they have a Facebook account. Primarily, the Facebook group should be used to create weekly events for the PAL sessions and for the revision sessions. You may also find it useful to use Facebook to create polls for what the PAL sessions should focus on. Polls can be a useful way of getting students to say what they want to do. In the past we have found that asking open questions tends not to get much response but giving multiple choice polls
increases the response rate. You can also use the Facebook group to upload any materials that are used in the PAL sessions or to answer questions that students ask.

**Use of MyAberdeen**

The PAL organisation on MyAberdeen should be used to upload any PAL materials that are used over the course of the semester. Please be careful not to upload any copyrighted material to MyAberdeen as it becomes the University’s responsibility. All PAL Leaders will be given admin rights to the organisation to allow you to upload materials. All material used in previous years will also be available on MyAberdeen but will be hidden from other students. If you wish to reuse any of this material, move the files to the appropriate folder and change the settings to visible. Instructions on how to use MyAberdeen will be given at the training session.

In addition to the PAL organisation, all PAL leaders will be given guest access to the MyAberdeen courses for the level they are leading. This will allow you to access the lecture slides and any other materials specific to the course the students are taking as there may have been changes since you took the course. This does mean that you will also receive all of the e-mails associated with these courses, you should just ignore these e-mails.

**Training help and documentation**

http://www.psy.gla.ac.uk/~steve/resources/paltraining.pdf

**Potential educational benefits**

These are possible benefits to the clients. Achieving any one is worthwhile; but often we can achieve several with one activity.

* Supplemetnal instruction. Any extra information from peers or facilitators can be helpful as an extra learning resource.

* Any extra processing is likely to promote learning: learning is strongly dependent on the time spent actually thinking about the subject.

* Deep learning. Time spent discussing the real meaning of the concepts in the course leads to "deep learning", longer retention, and greater ability to use the concepts in different contexts.

* Social and academic "integration" (see Tinto's model). This refers to getting to know others, and still more to feeling at home in the class, department, university, city, and in the role of student.
• Mentoring. The way a person new to a role (in this case the role of being a student on a course) picks up unwritten skills about how to perform it successfully by observing and interacting with a more experienced person (the mentor).

• Peer Assisted Learning: learning from and by discussing issues with one’s peers. This is probably even more use to the information giver than to the receiver, because explaining requires reprocessing the material. But it is also useful to the receiver, not least because peers are 100 times more available than staff.

• The higher level aim of this ("auto-PAL") is to get students into the habit of using peers and peer discussion routinely in all future learning: a fundamental study skill.

• Reflection. The practice of not just doing learning, but thinking about your learning process: how well you are doing, how you go about learning, and whether your methods and habits are being effective.

**The essential value from peers**

Another way of looking at it is that PAL is based on the fundamental insight that, for a learner, other learners can help in ways teachers are fundamentally unequipped to do (besides being cheaper, more numerous, and usually more available). Firstly, in giving explanations adapted to the learner. If you ask a teacher to explain something they have told you, many just repeat what they said: and the more scholarly and careful a teacher is, the more trapped they may be in this since they had planned carefully to say it as well as it possibly could be the first time. A teacher less expert in the subject matter, but better at teaching, may be able to paraphrase more or less deeply. But the essential issue is that (as constructivism asserts) learning depends not just on the desired end state but on the learner's beginning state: their prior knowledge and conceptions. Other learners are likely to know that from the inside, teachers cannot; so other learners can use referents and common knowledge they have, know what the difficulties and apparent objections are to the new concept, and so on. The second respect in which learners, especially perhaps students a year ahead, are better at teaching than teachers (especially at universities) is in study methods: they can say from personal experience what was important to do on this course, what worked and what didn't, what should and shouldn't be worried about. The person giving the course has never taken it, and has no direct experience of these aspects; and at university typically actually has no knowledge at all of how students cope with it.

**Here are the main points of the particular kind of PAL scheme we are attempting.**

• The PAL group sessions

• A number of leaders (rather than single ones)

• Their role is not that of expert, but mainly to support the group process

• Feedback sessions. Training: there is this workshop, but much of the learning will be in the
weekly meetings. The leaders (and organisers) will be learning as a group.

• There will be a web component to the scheme, for both students and leaders through Facebook and MyAberdeen.

• Every PAL session is to have its content reported on the web by the leaders where applicable.

Taken from PAL, Bournemouth University: www.peerlearning.ac.uk

ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATION

1. Ask open-ended questions

The best questions are usually open-ended (that require more than a yes, no or short answer). Open-ended questions are better because they require students to provide lengthy and therefore more substantial responses. The more students talk, the better the student leader and other students are able to understand their ideas and thinking.

2. Wait for student responses

It is important to train yourself to wait for student answers. Students may need time to think and gain confidence when asked a question. After a while they will usually respond with an answer or another question. Waiting for answers is a difficult but important skill – it can be very tempting to answer questions for students or jump in with another question or answer – learn to be patient and this will usually lead to better discussion and more group involvement.

Encourage them to find the answers in their lecture notes.

You should also wait for other students to comment after a member of the class has said something. Don’t immediately label an answer right or wrong – wait to see if other students have anything to add, and encourage them to do so.

3. Use Socratic questioning

Socratic questioning can be used to lead students to correct answers. This is where the PAL Leader breaks down difficult concepts into small chunks of information that students can answer more easily. Instead of asking “How do we address this whole problem?” ask first “What is the first thing we need to do to understand this?”

4. Encourage student questions

Student questions form the raw material for PAL sessions. Always ask if students have questions and offer plenty of time to answer.

5. Place the emphasis on student ideas
Always encourage students to share their thoughts, because students build new concepts upon their own ideas and new course material.

6. Be a role model by using “I” statements yourself

Reflecting on your first year experience and being open and direct with the group. If you don’t understand something or can’t remember, then say so. This will help students feel that you are involved as a participant – what would you have done?

7. Avoid interrupting student answers

PAL should be a safe and comfortable environment for students to try things out, attempt answers and make mistakes. Remember it is often from making mistakes that our best learning comes about.

8. Refer to the syllabus regularly

Encourage students to bring their course handbook containing unit syllabi to PAL sessions. Check that students understand the requirements of the reading lists, assignments and any tests/projects. Get them to look regularly at the learning outcomes for each unit so they are well aware of what they should be able to do.

9. Use small group/pair work

Use individual and pair work to get students involved. The student leader can create a problem or two based on the course for students to do. This can help students become immersed in the material and provide a springboard for discussion. Where students are engaged in individual or pair work this can also provide an opportunity for the leader to offer more individual assistance.

10. Get students to use the whiteboard

Physical activity helps prevent students being too passive or bored, it also encourages students to talk to one another.

11. Use positive reinforcement

This can have a positive effect on learning and confidence. Examples of positive reinforcement include offering praise for an answer (even if not correct), using a posture of interest and concern, maintaining eye contact, smiling and nodding and making positive comments.

12. Repeat student responses

This can act as positive reinforcement, to summarise or clarify comments and enable others to hear comments.

Some considerations for PAL session-planning
How will you arrange the room?
Where will you sit?
What materials will you need?
How will you welcome people into the session?
How will you introduce the group members to each other?
How can you make the early sessions feel relaxed, enjoyable and friendly?
Will you use an ‘ice-breaker’?
What will you do if students expect you to teach them?
How will you ensure that individual members communicate with one another?
How will you ensure you keep to time?
How will you end a session?

Some Principles of PAL

1. PAL is a methodology for learner support.
2. PAL is small group learning.
3. PAL is facilitated by other students acting as mentors.
4. PAL is confidential.
5. PAL is voluntary.
6. PAL is non-remedial.
7. PAL is participative.
8. PAL encourages collaborative learning, rather than competitive learning.
9. PAL is content based and process orientated.
10. PAL integrates effective learning strategies within the course content.
11. PAL works in the language of the discipline.
12. PAL does not create dependency.
13. PAL is pro-active, not reactive.
14. PAL encourages learner autonomy.
15. PAL decreases drop-out rates and aids retention.
16. PAL gives opportunity to increase academic performance.
17. PAL challenges the barriers between year groups.
18. PAL benefits all students regardless of current academic competency.
19. PAL gives privacy to practise the subject and make mistakes and build up confidence.

20. PAL enables a clear view of course expectations.

**Agenda for PAL sessions**

Each week should have some specific items on the agenda, these can be generated from using the poll questions in the Facebook group and through the identified ‘friction points’ (i.e., deadlines). In addition to these specific items, students should be told to come to the PAL questions with ideas, questions, and suggestions for topics.

Besides the explicit agenda that was advertised and is the main reason the students come to the session, there could be some tacit or implicit items that are good for students in reality but that might not be a reason for them choosing to come, and anyway would usually be very short.

1. As students come in, ask them what their current deadlines are; then what they are doing about it. [Implicit agenda: simply by reminding, get them in the habit of reviewing this regularly, and so take step one towards better time management planning.] (If they don’t know what their deadlines are, don’t tell them: get them to ask each other and check in the course handbook.)

Perhaps, if you like the idea or students ask for it, could at some point do a longer session on this: on planning for an essay or lab report. One of the key points to get across (probably not by lecturing but somehow by getting them to discuss) is the very simple one that such activities are not one indivisible lump, but have subparts; and each part can and should be done at a different time, may well be of different difficulty (for instance I have to be at my best for creating an essay plan; but I can do reading when less than best, and can do fixing typos when really pretty tired).

2. Then ask them what their last (psych) lecture was about. Possibly smile and bet them they can’t remember. [Implicit agenda: get them into the habit of doing brief overviews/reviews of lectures, preferably every day there is a lecture. An aspect of this, is to run self-checks on whether they are understanding and keeping up as they go along.] Step 2 would be co-construct a few major headings; and step 3 to store that as a plan to use later in revision and/or readings.

Perhaps, if you like the idea or students ask for it, could at some point do a longer session on this. The longer version would be to co-construct a detailed outline of the lecture’s ideas. And beyond that, to discuss quite deeply what the ideas are and further implications and examples.

**Generic Agenda**

Here’s a list of generic items, perhaps particularly relevant to a drop-in session where the topics are decided by the students on the spot, rather than in advance.
1. [integration]: nameplates and re-introductions. (Remember, this can be MORE important in groups with many regular attenders: if you don’t do introductions for newcomers, they feel they don’t belong.)

2. [Agenda] Agreeing the rest of the agenda with the group. ("Has anyone brought any issues or items they particularly want the group to help with this time?") In particular, adding items, re-ordering them. Agreeing whether (a) to cover all items or (b) just to see how far the group gets down the list. Having the agenda on a flipchart where all can see it throughout the meeting can be handy.

3. ["Contract"] It may sometimes be helpful to explicitly discuss and agree a "contract": what the rules are for this group. E.g. no calling me stupid, do/don’t stick to academic topics, not talking about individuals outside the group, ...

4. [PAL] Any course admin. items anyone wants to ask the group (e.g. times, dates, ....)

5. [PAL] Any basic course content items. Possible prompt (if you want to spend time on this, but the students don’t volunteer any): "Summarise in a sentence the most important overall point of the last lecture".

6. [deep learning] Introduce one of the current week’s "deep learning" questions. Or improvise: "What is, what defines, psychology?" "Is it worth studying, and if so why?" "How is it different from what you expected? from what you wish you were learning about?" "What is the most interesting issue touched on in the last week? (and why do you think it is interesting)"

7. [mentoring] Anything about being a student on this course you want to ask me about? What is your experience of it like so far? Unsolicited advice from the facilitator e.g. don’t leave the essay until the last week ...
   Also: issues about being a student in general, ....

8. [reflection, study skills] How well do you understand the material so far? How do you know this? What did you do to check you understood it? Set a quiz item for the rest of the group...

9. [Auto-PAL] Do you discuss course issues with other students apart from in this group? Do you think organising a private study group would be useful? ...

10. [feedback] At the end, if you can bear to, spend 2 minutes asking for feedback on the session.
    o **How useful:** E.g. "On a scale from zero (no use at all) to 10 (couldn’t have been better), how useful do you feel this session was for you?" and go round each person quickly. Then "Any suggestions about what to do differently next session?"
      (This only gives you a rough idea, but it does help especially when you notice differences from session to session. It also encourages students to make suggestions about what they would like to cover, and lets them know you are listening to them.)

    o Or ask each person to say **what** they each got out of the session i.e. instead of a value number, to reflect and discuss briefly what it was. The point of this (besides feedback to the facilitators) is to encourage them to recognise consciously what the session does for them, which may encourage them to return.

    o Ask for feedback not on the value of the session for them, but on **how good/bad your chairing was**. Good for improving the skill of chairing itself. (Especially good if you rotate the chair to share the practising with the clients.)
Useful links

Designing PAL sessions: http://www.psy.gla.ac.uk/~steve/resources/palacts.html

Psychology blogs example: http://blogs.psy.gla.ac.uk/stats/

PAL leader training handbook from University of Queensland:

PAL at Bournemouth: http://pal.bournemouth.ac.uk/

PAL at Glasgow: http://www.psy.gla.ac.uk/~steve/resources/pal.html